DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 456 882 JC 010 612

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TITLE	Research Report: Alternative Calendar Student Survey.
INSTITUTION	Mount San Jacinto Coll., San Jacinto, CA.
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	16p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.msjc.cc.us/research/reportsmenu.htm.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Students; Community Colleges; *Flexible Scheduling; *Nontraditional Students; Parents; *School Schedules; Self Supporting Students; Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics; Student Reaction; *Student Surveys; Time Blocks; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Mount San Jacinto College CA

ABSTRACT

Eleven classes from the San Jacinto campus and ten classes from the Menifee Valley campus of Mount San Jacinto College (MSJC) (California) participated in a survey designed to obtain students' preferences for an alternative 16-6-16-6 academic calendar. Stratified random sampling techniques were used to obtain representative courses from across the curriculum and for time-of-day offerings. Completed surveys were returned by 322 students. The sample was found to be representative of the MSJC student population as a whole. Student characteristics were also examined, such as age and employment status, in terms of influence on students' preference for an alternative calendar. Results indicate that 48% of students preferred a 16-6-16-6 calendar, while 39% preferred the current calendar; 13% were undecided. The study also found that the majority of students surveyed (73%) worked at least 20 hours per week, and 50% reported the presence of at least one dependent in the household. Continuing students made up 67% of the sample, and 58% of the students surveyed planned to earn a two-year degree and transfer. The report includes figures showing schedule preference by: (1) gender; (2) age; and (3) weekly working hours. Table 3 shows calendar preferences according to gender, and frequencies within gender according to marital status, child-care needs, student status, and transfer plans. (Survey is appended.) (NB)

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ED 456 882

Research Report: Alternative Calendar Student Survey

Kimberley Cox

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Research Report: Alternative Calendar Student Survey

Brief Summary of Findings

Eleven (11) classes from the San Jacinto campus and 10 classes from the Menifee Valley campus participated in a survey designed to obtain students' preferences for an alternative academic calendar. Stratified random sampling techniques were used to obtain representative courses from across the curriculum and for time of day offerings. Completed surveys were obtained from 322 students. Student characteristics were also examined, such as age and employment status, in terms of influence on students' preference for an alternative 16-6-16-6 calendar.

Results:

- 48% of students preferred an alternative 16-6-16-6 academic calendar, 39% preferred the current calendar, and 13% were undecided.

- San Jacinto students indicated a slightly stronger preference for the alternative calendar (52.1%) compared to Menifee Valley students, who indicated a slight preference for the current calendar (45.2%).

The following profiles characterize students who indicated a preference for the alternative 16-6-16-6 academic calendar (please see report for detailed results):

- Males, regardless of age or employment status.

- Students ages 26-34 years old, as a whole.

- Females 20-34 years of age, regardless of employment status.

- Males and females with 2 or more dependents in the household, regardless of marital status.

Research Report: Alternative Calendar Student Survey
Kimberley Cox, M.A., Research Assistant

Eleven (11) classes from the San Jacinto campus and 10 classes from the Menifee Valley campus participated in a survey designed to obtain students' preferences for an alternative academic calendar. Stratified random sampling techniques were used to obtain representative courses from across the curriculum and for time of day offerings (see class list below). Student characteristics were also examined, such as age and employment status, in terms of influence on students' preference for an alternative 16-6-16-6 calendar.

	Menifee Valley	San Jacinto
Early Day	ANAT-101 ENGL-103 MATH-090 MUL-112 MATH-211	ENGL-098 GEOG-101 MATH-096 MATH-110 PSYC-101
Late Day	ART-102 ENGL-062 SPAN-101	ENGL-062 MATH-105 PE-102
Evening	CAPP-122A NURS-100	CSIS-124A ECS-107 RE-144

A sample of 322 students from both campuses completed a brief survey during a selected class period. A trained interviewer entered each class and administered the survey after providing students with information about the purpose of the survey and a brief summary of calendar options (see survey materials attached).

Results from the survey found that 48% of students reported a preference for an alternative 16-6-16-6 academic calendar, 39% preferred the current calendar, and 13% were undecided (Note: 22 students did not indicate a calendar preference; see Table 1).

Table 1. Academic Calendar Preference

Response	Frequency	Percent
16-6-16-6 calendar	144	48%
Current calendar	117	39%
Undecided	39	13%
Total	300	100%
Missing	22	
Total	322	

Student characteristics of the sample surveyed include the following: 65.5% female, 34.5% male; 37.6% fell in the age range of 20 to 25 years old (see Figures 1 and 2). The majority (62.7%) reported being single, followed by married (25.8%). The presence of at least one dependent in the household was split equally, with 50% of students responding "none", and 50% responding

to the presence of at least one dependent ("one", 16.1%; "two", 17.1%; "three or more", 16.8%). Approximately 74% of the students did not indicate that child-care nor dependent care was an influential consideration in scheduling classes. Seventy-three percent (73%) of students were employed and the majority (69.7%) of these students worked at least 20 hours per week (see Figure 3). The majority of students sampled were continuing students (66.5%) and plan to earn a two-year degree and transfer (58.1%). **These characteristics indicated the sample is representative of the MSJC student population as a whole.**

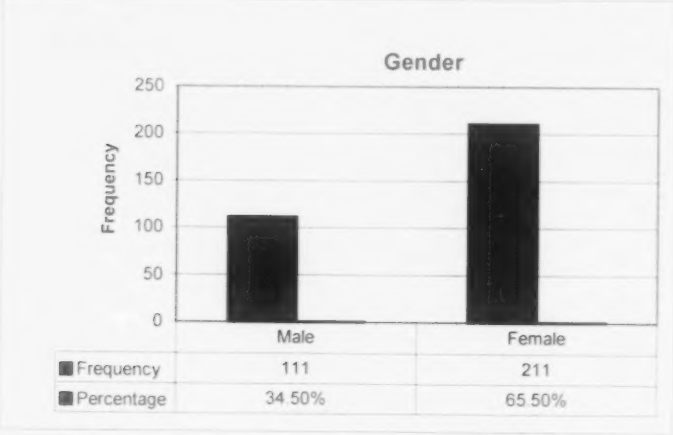


Figure 1

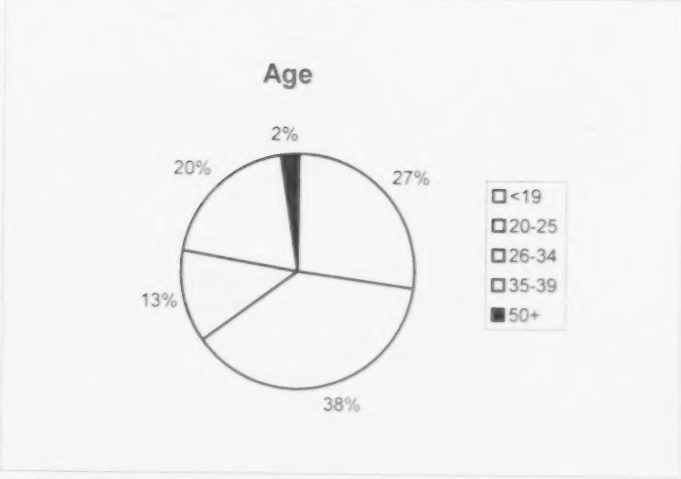


Figure 2

Figure 3

Descriptive analysis of the data, as reported above, initiated further investigation to evaluate potential relationships between calendar preference and student characteristics. A campus comparison was also completed to examine differences in student characteristics on calendar preference at the San Jacinto campus compared to the Menifee Valley campus. A brief summary of these analyses is described in further detail below.

Calendar preference by student characteristics

Gender & age:
Males reported a stronger preference for an alternative calendar (52.9%) versus current calendar (34.6%) compared to females who reported a relatively equal preference for an alternative (45.4%) versus current (41.3%) calendar (see Table 2).

Table 2. Gender by Calendar Preference Crosstabulation

		Calendar Preference		
		16-6-16-6	**Current**	**Undecided**
Male	Frequency	55	36	13
	% within gender	52.9%	34.6%	12.5%
Female	Frequency	89	81	26
	% within gender	45.4%	41.3%	13.3%
Total	Frequency	144	117	39

Students 26 to 34 years of age (n=41) reported the largest difference in calendar preference. Twenty-two (22; 56.4%) prefer an alternative 16-6-16-6 calendar, 12 (30.8%) prefer the current calendar, and 5 (12.8%) were undecided (see Table 3). Of this subgroup of students, 73.2% are female, single (41.5%) or married (43.9%) and 58.5% reported child-care needs. In addition, 77.5% are employed and work more than 20 hours per week (67.7%). The majority are

continuing (53.7%) or re-entry (34.1%) students with plans to transfer to the CSU (25.7%) or UC (20%) system (31.4% also indicated plans to transfer but did not know where).

Table 3. Student Characteristics and Calendar Preference of 26-34 Age Group

		Calendar Preference	
Age	**16-6-16-6**	**Current Calendar**	**Undecided**
Frequency	22	12	5
% within age	56.4%	30.8%	12.8%
Gender	Male	Frequency	11
		% within gender	26.8%
	Female	Frequency	30
		% within gender	73.2%
		Frequency	**Percentage**
Marital Status	Single	17	41.5%
	Married	18	43.9%
	Divorced	5	12.2%
	Widowed	0	0.0%
	Other	1	2.4%
Child care	Yes	24	58.5%
	No	17	41.5%
Employed	Yes	31	77.5%
	No	9	22.5%
Status	First-time	5	12.2%
	Continuing	22	53.7%
	Re-entry	14	34.1%
Transfer Plans	CSU	9	25.7%
	UC	7	20.0%
	Private/out-of state	2	5.7%
	Yes, don't know yet	11	31.4%
	Won't transfer	6	17.1%

Marital status:
Married students reported the strongest preference for an alternative calendar (50.7%) compared to the current calendar (29.3%), while single students reported moderately equal preferences for an alternative (49.2%) versus current (39.3%) calendar.

Employment:
The majority (69.7%) of students surveyed work more than 20 hours per week. The majority of working students, who indicated a calendar preference, prefer an alternative calendar with the exception of students reporting 40+ hours of work per week. These students (n=43) reported a slight preference for the current calendar (44.2%) over an alternative calendar (41.9%).

Current student status:

First-time and re-entry students did not indicate a strong preference for either calendar option. However, continuing students (n=199) reported the strongest preference for an alternate calendar (50.8%) versus current calendar (36.7%).

Educational goal:
Calendar preference differs depending on the educational goal reported by students (see Table 4). Specifically, students planning to transfer (n=214) prefer an alternative calendar (53.3%) compared to students not planning to transfer (n=38) prefer the current calendar (47.4%).

Table 4. Transfer Plans by Calendar Preference Crosstabulation

		Calendar Preference		
		16-6-16-6	**Current Calendar**	**Undecided**
No transfer plans	Count	12	18	8
	%	31.6%	**47.4%**	21.1%
Plan to transfer	Count	114	74	26
	%	**53.3%**	34.6%	12.1%

Of students enrolled for education/career/personal development (n=36; 11.3% of total sample), slightly more (48.1%) prefer the current calendar (versus 40.7% alternative calendar, 11.1% undecided). These students are predominately single (52.8%), female (75%), employed (85.7%), and work at least 30 hours per week (60%; with 34.3% reporting 40+ hours of work per week).

Child-care and dependent care needs:
Eighty-four (84; 26.1%) students reported child-care needs. Of this subgroup of students, 78 indicated a calendar preference: 53.8% prefer an alternative calendar, 32% prefer current calendar, and 14.1% were undecided. Fifty percent (50%) of students surveyed (n=161) have dependent care needs to consider when scheduling classes. This subgroup of students showed a strong preference for an alternate calendar. In fact, preference for the alternate 16-6-16-6 calendar increased as the number of reported dependents in the household increased (see Table 5).

Table 5. Number of Dependents by Calendar Preference Crosstabulation

		Calendar Preference		
		16-6-16-6	**Current Calendar**	**Undecided**
None	Frequency	71	69	15
	%	**45.8%**	**44.5%**	9.7%
One	Frequency	20	18	8
	%	**43.5%**	**39.1%**	17.4%
Two	Frequency	28	19	6
	%	**52.8%**	**35.8%**	11.3%
Three or more	Frequency	25	11	10
	%	**54.3%**	**23.9%**	21.7%

Campus comparison

The student sample surveyed from the San Jacinto campus (n=175) is composed of students that are predominately female (58.9%), single (62.9%), and employed at least 20 hours per week

(68.1%). Similarly, the student sample surveyed from the Menifee Valley campus (n=147) is composed of students that are also predominately female (73.5%), single (62.6%), and employed at least 20 hours per week (71.2%). However, calendar preference differs between the two campuses. Students at the San Jacinto campus reported a preference for an alternative calendar (52.1%) versus the current calendar (33.9%), compared to students at the Menifee Valley campus who reported a slight preference for the current calendar (45.2%) versus an alternative calendar (43%).

Figure 4 (see attached) reveals that students surveyed from the San Jacinto campus indicated plans to transfer and plans to earn a two-year AA degree at a higher rate than did students surveyed from the Menifee Valley campus (90.7% versus 79.5%, for transfer plans and 65.9% versus 49% for plans to earn AA degree, respectively). Students surveyed from the Menifee Valley campus indicated a "vocational certificate" was their primary educational goal at a higher rate than did students from the San Jacinto campus (15.6% versus 4.6%, respectively).

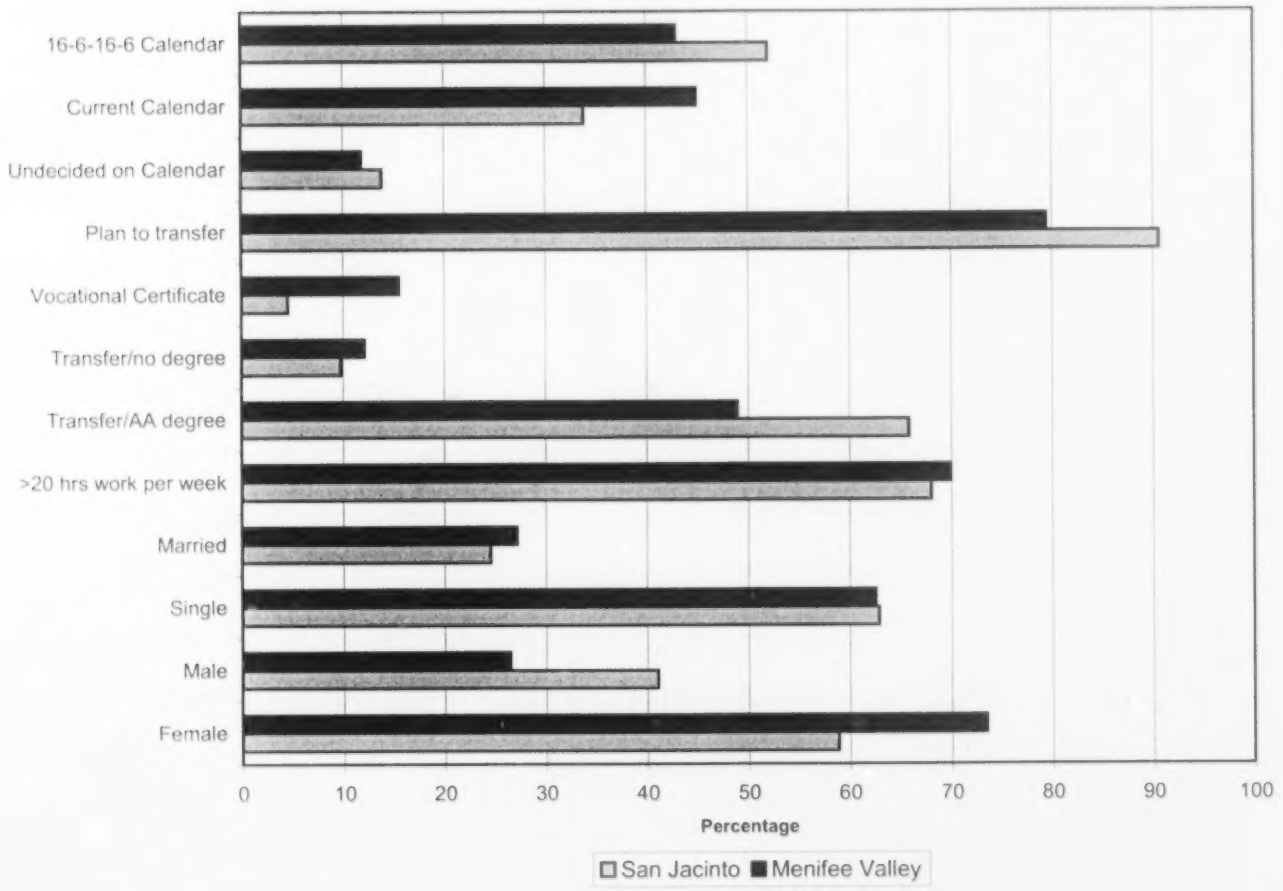
Summary

Overall, students indicated a preference for an alternative 16-6-16-6 calendar. Forty-eight percent (48%) reported a preference for an alternative calendar, 39% preferred the current calendar, and 13% were undecided. The majority of students surveyed were female (65.5%), younger than 25 years of age (64.9%), and single (62.7%). Fifty percent (50%) of the student sample reported the presence of at least one dependent in the household but approximately 74% did not indicate that child-care nor dependent care was an influential consideration when scheduling classes. The majority of students were employed (73%) and work at least 20 hours per week. Continuing students make up the majority of students sampled (66.5%), as do students planning to earn a two-year degree and transfer (58.1%).

A detailed review of calendar preference by specific student characteristics revealed that certain student attributes were influential in choice of preference. Male students and students within the age range of 26 to 34 years old reported a strong preference for an alternate calendar (52.9% and 56.4%, respectively). The majority of working students prefer an alternate calendar with the exception of those students who indicated working 40+ hours per week. Continuing students and students planning to transfer also reported a strong preference for an alternative calendar (50.8% and 53.3%, respectively). Students surveyed on the San Jacinto campus reported a preference for an alternative calendar (52.1%), whereas students on the Menifee Valley campus reported a slight preference for the current calendar (45.2%), compared to an alternate calendar (43%).

In summary, students 26-34 years of age and those students with 2 or more dependents (regardless of age) may prefer the 16-6-16-6 academic calendar. Students who plan to transfer also indicate a strong preference for the alternative calendar, which may account for the difference found between the two campuses. The student sample from Menifee Valley was more diverse in their educational goals, as compared to the San Jacinto sample – who mainly indicated their educational goal was to transfer. ***However the college chooses to proceed in this matter, it is recommended that student needs be considered.***

Figure 4. Campus Comparison: Calendar Preference and Student Characteristics



An assistant from the Research Office has just presented you with information regarding alternative academic calendars. We are very interested in your opinion on this issue. The first 15 questions will help us to understand how different personal factors may effect your opinion. Please give your answers to Questions 1 through 16 on the Scantron provided. You may use a No. 2 pencil or blue or black ink. Please fill in only one answer for each question. **Completion of this survey is voluntary.**

1. Please indicate your gender:
   (A) Male
   (B) Female

2. What is your age?
   (A) < 19
   (B) 20 – 25
   (C) 26 – 34
   (D) 35 – 49
   (E) 50 +

3. What is your marital status?
   (A) Single
   (B) Married
   (C) Divorced
   (D) Widowed
   (E) Other

4. How many dependents do you have in your household?
   (A) None
   (B) One
   (C) Two
   (D) Three or more

5. Do you have child-care needs that must be considered when scheduling your classes?
   (A) Yes
   (B) No

6. Do you have other dependent care needs (parents, siblings, etc.) that must be considered when scheduling your classes?
   (A) Yes
   (B) No

7. Are you currently employed? (If No, please go on to Question 9)
   (A) Yes
   (B) No

8. How many hours per week do you work on average?
   (A) Under 10 hours
   (B) 10 – 20
   (C) 20 – 30
   (D) 30 – 40
   (E) 40 +

9. What is your primary mode of transportation to campus?
   (A) Public transportation (e.g., bus)
   (B) Car pool
   (C) Own car
   (D) Bike
   (E) Walk

10. Approximately how many miles from campus do you live?
   (A) Less than 5
   (B) 6 – 15
   (C) 16 – 30
   (D) More than 30

11. What is your current student status?
   (A) First time student (this is your first semester in any college)
   (B) Continuing student (you attended MSJC or another college last semester)
   (C) Re-entry student (you attended MSJC or another college before, but stopped out for at least one semester)
   (D) 11^{th}-12^{th} grade student

12. How many semesters have you been at MSJC (including this semester)
   (A) 1
   (B) 2
   (C) 3-4
   (D) 5 or more

13. How many classes are you taking this semester? If you have a class with a lab, please count that as two classes
   (A) 1
   (B) 2
   (C) 3
   (D) 4
   (E) 5 or more

14. What is your primary educational goal at MSJC?
    (A) Earn a two-year degree as well as courses to transfer for a four-year degree
    (B) Complete courses to transfer but not earn a degree
    (C) Earn a vocational certificate
    (D) Educational, career, or personal development
    (E) Other (including undecided at this time)

15. If you answered "A" to the above question, where do you plan to transfer?
    (A) To a California State University (CSU) campus
    (B) To a University of California (UC) campus
    (C) To a private or out-of-state college
    (D) I will be transferring for a four-year degree, but I don't know where
    (E) I won't be transferring (just in case you want to let us know this twice)

16. Based on what I have learned today, I would prefer to take classes:
    (A) On a 16-6-16-6 calendar
    (B) On the current calendar
    (C) Undecided

Thank you for your participation.

Script for Alternate Calendar Survey

Hi – I'm _____, from the Research Office. Your instructor has given me permission to come into your class and have you complete a survey regarding Mt. San Jacinto College' academic calendar – that is, the number of weeks per semester and per summer terms. Completion of this survey by you is completely voluntary. However, your responses will help guide the college over the next few years in determining how to better meet the needs of its students. So, we hope you will participate.

Your answers are also confidential. We are not asking you for your name or any other way of connecting you to your answers. All responses will be grouped, based on particular student profiles (which I will be explaining in a moment). And I will be the one picking up the surveys – your instructor will not even know if you have completed the survey.

Any questions thus far?

OK – so what are we asking you about? The first 15 questions on this survey will just help us to have a better understanding of our students – their age groups, how they get to the college, whether or not they work, whether or not they have child care or dependent care issues to consider, etc. All of the questions we are asking may relate to how you think the college could set its calendar to meet your educational needs. So when you get to these questions, please answer them as they apply to you. One answer per question, please.

The last question relates to how you think the college should set its calendar. What do I mean by that? Specifically, I'm referring to the number of weeks in the fall and spring semesters. This also leads into whether or not we should have a shorter summer session with a winter intersession. Let me explain how we do it now.

Currently we offer fall and spring semesters of approximately 18 weeks each. That includes the week of finals. We start fall semester in August and end before Christmas. We then come back in January and go to May or June, depending how late in January we start. By law, we have to offer a certain number of class days and hours per semester for you to get credit. But as long as we keep within the state requirements, we can modify the number of weeks.

Some people think the current way we calendar semesters is just fine. Some people want a change. So we are considering different possibilities for scheduling. If we change the number of weeks we calendar fall and spring semesters, then we can also modify how many weeks we offer summer school and also consider offering a winter intersession. While there may be other models, these are the two options we are considering at this time ***[Research assistant will hand out sheet with explanation and possible calendars as examples for students to look at while she discusses the information below***]:

1. (Option 1 on your handout) Keeping things the way they are

2. (Option 2 on your handout) Scheduling Fall and Spring terms for 16 weeks each, including final exams. If we choose this option, we will probably start fall around the

same time we do now or perhaps move it to start after Labor Day. Spring semester would start later in February. That would give the college time to offer a winter session of 6 weeks. Summer would also be six weeks

As with any set of options, there are advantages and disadvantages to each choice. The 16-6-16-6 calendar may be better for some students with certain family or work obligations or for those students who do better in a more intensive college experience. The intersessions will allow students to complete prerequisites and take general education courses in a more focused manner. Students would end up taking fewer courses in each term (because the course meeting dates and times will have to be expanded from the current schedule), but would have more terms in which to enroll.

The current calendar may be better for those students who like to spread out their classes within the semester and who do better with shorter in-class time per week, but longer course time during the semester. This type of calendar may be better for students in vocational programs (including nursing).

So what questions do you have right now?

Let me reiterate – the college has not decided to make any changes, we are exploring the options. For at least the next two years we will stay on the current calendar. But your opinion will help us make decisions regarding any changes to begin in 2003.
[Hand out Scantrons, pencils, and surveys]

Please fill in the Scantron form using the questions and answer options on the survey questionnaire. You may use a pencil or black ink or blue ink to fill in the Scantron. Do **not** fill in your name. Where it says "Subject" put

[*Research assistant reads course name/number/section*].

Please leave the rest of that information blank.

[*Research assistant points to the parts on the Scantron form*].

I will give you a few minutes to complete this survey. Feel free to ask me any questions about the survey – I will do my best to answer them.

[Allow 5 minutes for students to complete the survey: After the students are finished . . .]

Please pass all papers to the end of the row. I'll pick up the surveys on my way out. We will give the results to your instructor by finals week.

Thanks for your assistance.